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## Viewing cable 09BAKU478, IRAN VIEW FROM BAKU: VIOLENCE IN BALUCHISTAN

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09BAKU478**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09BAKU478	2009-06-12 12:11	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Baku

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article3999427.ece>

VZCZCXRO7600  
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHKB #0478/01 1631211  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
R 121211Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1358  
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0087  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0043  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0013  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0001  
RUSBPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0001  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 000478

SIPDIS

EO 12958 DECL: 06/03/2019  
TAGS PREL, PTER, SNAR, ENRG, ELTN, AJ, PK, TU, TX, IR  
BAKU 00000478 001.2 OF 003  
SUBJECT: IRAN VIEW FROM BAKU: VIOLENCE IN BALUCHISTAN  
REDUCING BORDER SECURITY; GOAJ OFFICIAL WARNS AGAINST MANIPULATION OF IRAN'S MINORITIES; IRAN TRANSIT-ORIGIN HEROIN SEIZURES RISE; ALLEGED PROE  
REF: A) KARACHI 145 B) 2008 BAKU 917

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR ROBERT GARVERICK, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary

1. (C) "Iran view from Baku" is the first in an occasional series from Embassy Baku Iran Watcher that will report on short and/or partially documented items of interest to Iran information consumers, but not necessarily warranting separate cables. This cable includes information on reported increasing security problems in Iranian Baluchistan, including alleged disruption of Iran-Pakistan railroad links; a message from a senior GOAJ military official about the dangers of stirring up Iranian minorities; the apparent quadrupling in first quarter 2009 (compared to first quarter 2008) seizures in Azerbaijan of Iranian-transited heroin; and skepticism about Iranian gas export contracts, related by industry participants at the recently-completed Baku Oil and Gas show. End Summary.

Baluchi Violence Obstructing Iran-Pakistan Rail Link?

2. (C) Several Iranian contacts, including apolitical businessmen, have told Baku Iran watcher that the recent suicide bombing of a Sh'ia mosque, and subsequent attack on a campaign center in Zahedan, reflect a surge in Baluchi violence in the border area and inside Pakistan that has been building steadily over several years. According to one source, the Iranian security forces may be losing effective control over growing areas in the countryside. All noted that the rising violence in Iranian Baluchistan is mirrored and influenced by similar events on the Pakistani side of the border (recently described in ref(a)).

3. (C) One alleged result is the apparent postponement of completion of the long-planned improved rail link between Pakistan and Iran, designed to run through or near Baluchi territory on both sides of the border. The current rail connection, running between Quetta, Pakistan and Zahedan, Iran is in poor condition and has low freight-carrying capacity. Moreover, according to reports it has recently been repeatedly subject to rocket attacks and other disruption by Baluchi tribes. An improved link also traversing Iranian and Pakistani Baluchi areas was originally supposed to have been inaugurated in March, 2009, with container train service beginning in August. According to Iranian sources in Baku, this deadline is unlikely to be achieved, and regular use of the Iran-Pakistan railway for significant cargo shipment is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

14. (S) xxxxxxxxxxxx quoted the Ministry source as saying that in 2008 Iran asked Pakistan to establish a new, "more secure and modern" route, but that Pakistan has so far refused. The source added that Tehran is rife with rumors about the increasing lack of safety in Baluchi areas, and claimed that many guard and police posts in Sistan-Baluchistan areas are no longer occupied at night due to the increased danger of attack.

15. (C) Another source, xxxxxxxxxxxx blamed the Ahmadinejad administration for pursuing provocative anti-Sunni practices (including harassment of Sunni clergy and congregations and raids on Sunni mosques) and other "arrogant" crackdowns over the last few years. He claimed that these practices, combined with high unemployment, perceived discrimination,

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and few government services, has increased anger among Baluchis, and identification of the central government as an "enemy." He cited the appointment of Ahmadinejad ally Habibullah Dehmordah as a Governor of Sistan-Baluchistan as a typical insensitive blunder, calling him a "stupid, brutal, Sunni-hater." (Note: Dehmordah was replaced as Governor in 2008 by Ali-Mohammed Azad. End Note).

#### GOAJ Military Figure Opposes Promoting Unrest in Iran -----

16. (S) At a 12 May meeting with a visiting group of 16 U.S. military general officers, the GOAJ's Special Assistant to the President for Defense, General Vahid Aliyev, related that he had recently met in Iranian Azerbaijan with (unnamed) high-ranking Iranian General.8 Although he did not provide details, Aliyev strongly implied that the Iranian General raised alleged "foreign-sponsored" efforts to foment unrest among Iranian ethnic groups, including Iranian Azerbaijanis (who make up nearly thirty percent of the Iranian population). Commenting on this issue, Aliyev asserted that "there have been four attempts by Iranian Azerbaijanis to assert autonomy in the last hundred years, all of which were crushed" by the Iranian state. As an example, Aliyev cited the Soviet effort during World War II to establish a breakaway "Republic of South Azerbaijan." The Soviets forces pulled back in 1946, after a "Truman-Stalin Agreement," which Aliyev depicted as a cynical "betrayal" of collaborating Iranian Azerbaijanis. He recounted that the resulting repression by Tehran resulted in the deaths of 60,000 Azeris, and the flight of many more into Soviet Azerbaijan.

17. (S) U.S. military participants agreed that Aliyev appeared to be implicitly signaling that outside fomenting of unrest in Iranian Azerbaijan is opposed by the GOAJ. Aliyev similarly told the U.S. officers that any foreign war with Iran will be bad for Azerbaijan, and result in a flood of refugees entering the country. (Note: The three other "failed Azerbaijani autonomy struggles" cited by Aliyev presumably refer to the early 20th century Constitutional Revolution, Azerbaijani resistance to Reza Shah's centralization policies in the 1920's, and efforts by senior Azerbaijani clerics and activists to obtain local autonomy in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. End note).

#### GOAJ Iran-Origin Heroin Seizures Continue Rise -----

18. (C) According to xxxxxxxxxxxx, export of narcotics from Iran into Azerbaijan continue to skyrocket (see ref b). According to statistics provided to Baku Iran watcher xxxxxxxxxxxx, Iran-origin heroin seizures (i.e., heroin derived from Afghani and Pakistani opium that entered Azerbaijan from Iran) in Azerbaijan nearly quadrupled during the first quarter of 2009, as compared to the first quarter of 2008. According to the GOAJ, virtually all of this heroin had been fully processed in labs and was "ready for market." Total heroin seizures in Azerbaijan during the first quarter of 2008 reflected a sharp increase over the first quarter of 2007; while in 2006 only twenty kilograms of such heroin was officially reported seized in Azerbaijan during the entire year. In contrast, reported GOAJ seizures of Iran-origin heroin during the first quarter of 2009 amounted to nearly 59,000 kilos, as compared to approximately 15,000 kilos of heroin seized in the first quarter of 2008.

#### Projected Problems in Iranian Gas Links -----

19. (C) The annual Baku Oil and Gas Show, held June 2-5, brought a variety of energy company executives and pundits to Baku, though no senior officials from Iran. An American

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interlocutor told Baku Iran Watcher on the side of the show that xxxxxxxxxxxx had confided to him in a private conversation xxxxxxxxxxxx that he viewed near-term implementation of the Iranian-Pakistani gas link project as "very unlikely." The downbeat comment by the xxxxxxxxxxxx was made despite the recent signing in Istanbul by President Ahmadinejad and President Zardari of an Iranian-Pakistani MOU committing to the gas project. According to this source, xxxxxxxxxxxx indicated that he had several reasons for this opinion, but the only one he elaborated was that "the Pakistanis don't have the money to pay for either the pipeline, or the gas."

10. (C) Meanwhile, during a panel discussion at the conference on the future prospects of Caspian gas, several commentators noted the difficulty of doing business in "unpredictable, overly bureaucratic" Iran, and the alleged historical "unreliability" of Iranian gas supply contracts previously reached with Turkey and Turkmenistan. For example, panelists recounted that, after long negotiations, Iran has four times failed to sign separate Liquid national Gas contracts at the last minute. Two panelists claimed that Iran has repeatedly diverted gas supplies to meet domestic needs, thereby interrupting its contractual gas exports - and has not paid contractual penalties for these violations.

11. (C) xxxxxxxxxxxx asserted bluntly that Iranian political leaders are totally focused on domestic needs and personal jockeying, and are simply not interested in hearing

about the value of optimizing foreign gas exports. The only exception, he claimed, is their interest in the notional prospect of annually exporting ten billion cubic meters (bcms) of gas to Europe. He attributed this interest to a conviction that such a deal will significantly increase Iran's political leverage in Europe and substantially insulate it from future European pressure - a perception he characterized as revealing, and "typically" unrealistic.

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